



# USAREC

## Exceptional Family Member Program Newsletter

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Please do not hesitate to call or email us at any time for assistance needed with your Exceptional Family Member.

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## 10 Tips for Enjoying the Holidays with Your Special Needs Child

Parents of children with special needs face even more challenges during the holidays: well-meaning relatives' comments, embarrassing moments during a child's melt-down, un-solicited parental advice — these are just a few of the uncomfortable situations parents may experience this time of the year. Try implementing the following tips for a happier holiday

1. Choose one or two things that are non-negotiable desires for the holidays. Is it a tree? Decorations? Gifts? Church? Make those the priority and don't stress over anything else.
2. Now that you've decided what's most important, modify those things to fit your family's needs.
3. Get through the Holidays one moment at a time, one day at a time. Don't be hard on yourself if things aren't picture perfect.
4. Don't go by the age recommendations on toy packaging when buying gifts for your special needs child. Go by your child's ability.
5. Attention from parents and loved ones is more important than toys and the greatest gift you can give your special needs child is time with you.
6. If going to Christmas parties is too stressful for you and your child, don't go. On the other hand, if you really want to go, don't let your child stop you. Your child needs to be exposed to different types of social situations, even if they are stressful. Through this type of exposure, he learns to cope. Also, have an escape plan. Discuss with your spouse or partner what you will do should the need to leave a room or party occur. Stick to the plan.
7. Use a calendar to help a child count down the days to the "big day." Some families enjoy making their own countdown calendars.
8. Help extended family members and friends understand your child by talking with them about your child's unusual behaviors before a party or event. Help them know how to respond and interact with your child. This may help avoid hurt feelings.
9. Explain to your child what is expected of him. You can use picture cards or social stories to help him understand.
10. Stay calm. Whenever you feel stressed, take a deep breath and whisper to yourself: "Peace on Earth. Good will toward men." Your child will sense your level of peace. If you need to arrange for child-care in order to recharge, do so. No one can parent a child alone, and parents of special needs children are no exception. If you need help in finding someone to help you, reach out to your church or neighbors. You'll be surprised how many people are truly willing to help. All you have to do is ask.

Article Source: <http://www.mnn.com/local-reports/indiana/local-blog/10-tips-for-enjoying-the-holidays-with-your-special-needs-child>



## Keeping Kids Warm, Dry and Safe in Cold Weather

### Tips to Winterize Your Home

1. Clean Those Gutters
2. Check the Furnace
3. Caulk around Doors and Windows
4. Replace Your Filters
5. Test Smoke Detectors, CO Monitors, and Fire Extinguishers
6. Inspect Your Roof for Damage
7. Fix Cracks in Your Walkways and Drive

### Tips to keep kids cold-weather-proof

#### 1. Dress Kids in Layers

If one layer gets wet, remove it to keep moisture away from the skin.

#### 2. Choose Warm Fabrics

Use fleece and wool garments instead of cotton clothes,

#### 3. Cover Extremities

Warm boots and mittens are essential because extremities are most prone to frostbite. Make sure kids cover their ears and nose and wear a hat to prevent significant heat loss from the head.

#### 4. Limit Time Outside

Children should come inside often to limit their exposure to the cold, and they should change out of wet clothing immediately.

### Special tips when traveling.

Children can also be at risk when traveling in the car during winter. Whether a long distance or just across town, be prepared for cold weather travel.

Just in case your car breaks down, or you are stranded, follow these suggestions for safe, warm car travel:

- Never leave kids unattended.
- Keep a winter survival kit in

the car with the following:

- Blankets
- Extra socks and gloves
- Snacks
- A first-aid kit

Read the full article [here](#)



## The Holidays With Food Allergies

This holiday season, ease the anxiety with these six tips to survive the holidays with food allergies.

### 1. Remind your kids about food allergies

Explain to your children that they must continue to be careful about what they eat. Remind kids how to explain their allergies and that even one little bite can be harmful.

### 2. Remind your adults about food allergies

Send an email, note or call your child's teacher and adult leaders of other activities, reminding them about your kids' allergy considerations. Give people plenty of notice and guide them about safe recipes. If you have little children with allergies, ask that no one feed your child without your knowledge.

### 3. Stay a step ahead of food allergies

Send safe, fun snacks with your kids to school for holiday parties or field trips. Before attending a party, church gathering or other event, eat something and feed your

children with allergies a hearty snack, and pack something they like.

### 4. Stand tall

You must not apologize for the allergy or worry about seeming 'over the top.'

### 5. Share info, ingredients and your favorite creations

For gatherings, bring a hearty side dish to avoid unnecessary risks and have something safe and delicious for kids with allergies to enjoy. If you're hosting, keep recipe and ingredients lists nearby as a resource for guests. Consider using a little card to note which dishes are nut-free, gluten-free, dairy-free or whatever.

### 6. Travel safely

If prescribed, keep epinephrine or other emergency meds on-hand. Don't accept food until you verify it's safe for your kids with allergies. Carry safe food with you in case you get delayed

Read Full Article [Here](#)



**KEEP  
CALM  
AND  
CARRY  
AN EPIPEN**

# Kids Corner

## Ways to Give Back During the Holiday Season

- Volunteer at a soup kitchen
- Bring baked goods to a nursing home
- Write a thoughtful note to someone special
- Send a card to the Troops deployed overseas
- Make hand made gifts for your loved ones
- Shovel snow for a neighbor
- Visit hospital patients

## Now That's Funny!

Q: How do Eskimos make their beds?

A: With sheets of ice and blankets of snow.

Q: What is a snowman's favorite breakfast?

A: Frosted Flakes!



# Resources

- Kids With Food Allergies Foundation (KFA) educates families and communities with practical food allergy management strategies to save lives and improve the quality of life for children and their families.

<http://community.kidswithfoodallergies.org>

- Disability.gov is the federal government website for comprehensive information on disability policies, programs and services in communities nationwide.

<https://www.disability.gov/>



- One of the founding purposes of Family Voices was to assist veteran parents to help other families raising their children with special health care needs.

[http://www.familyvoices.org/index\\_html](http://www.familyvoices.org/index_html)

- ParentSavvy is your child health and parenting resource offering parenting advice, tips, tools and expert answers to your questions.

<http://parentsavvy.com/home/>